FOX NFL AFFILIATION CONGA

1. BACKSTORY

The story of the mid-1990s FOX affiliation conga begins just months after the FOX network premiered in September 1986. In January 1987, FOX — owned at the time by News Corporation; founded by Australian native Rupert Murdoch — sought to purchase the rights to Monday Night Football coverage away from ABC after negotiations stalled between that network and the National Football League following budget cuts at ABC Sports after Dennis Swanson relieved Roone Arledge of his duties there while Arledge was reassigned to focus exclusively on ABC News (Roone had juggled the presidency of both divisions for 9 years), bidding roughly $1.3 billion. Eventually, the NFL — due precisely to FOX having not been fully established as a major network (in the earliest years, FOX - save for the ill-fated "Late Show" with Joan Rivers - limited its programming to weekends; leaving their affiliates to continue programming as de facto independents} — turned them down and ultimately ABC would retain Monday Night Football rights. During the interim, FOX would gradually build a stable of successful series that were much edgier than what the “Big 3” were airing at that time, such as “Married…with Children” (which sought to set itself apart from the top-rated show on TV with a working title of "Not the Cosbys"); “The Simpsons”; “21 Jump Street”; "Beverly Hills, 90210"; "Melrose Place" and most recently “The X-Files”; sketch comedy series “In Living Color” and early examples of the modern reality series in “C.O.P.S.” and “America’s Most Wanted”; eventually programming prime-time blocks for all 7 days of the week by 1993.

By the latter part of that year, the NFL’s broadcast deals signed

in 1990 with ABC, CBS, NBC and cable networks ESPN and TNT were on the verge of expiring (that 1990 contract saw NBC and CBS retain their traditional American Football Conference and National Football Conference coverage rights, respectively; with ABC retaining Monday Night Football and ESPN and TNT splitting the full season of Sunday Night Football rights {TNT carried the first half of the season, ESPN the second}). It was at this point that FOX made a bold move, offering $1.58 billion over 4 years for the NFC package held by CBS. CBS, having spent several years in the ratings cellar with a series of shows whose average viewer age skewed much older than the other networks and under the reign of budget-conscious Laurence Tisch following the debt-laden disasters of the 1985 Ted Turner attempted takeover, the aftermath that followed (such as the sale of Columbia Records to Sony in 1988 and the ensuing cutbacks at CBS News) and the disastrous 1990-93 Major League Baseball coverage rights that had just ended as what Mike Lupica called the “Vietnam of televised sports”, only offered $290 million. The result: Shockwaves were heard throughout the sports and television worlds when on December 17, 1993 the NFL accepted FOX’s offer, thus resulting in professional football leaving CBS after 37 years, with a belated attempt by the “Tiffany Network” to lure AFC coverage away from NBC being rejected (4 years later, CBS would succeed in regaining NFL rights by outbidding NBC for their AFC coverage beginning in 1998).

2. SEEKING TO UPGRADE

At the time FOX’s bid was accepted; only four of its owned-and-operated (or O&O) stations were on VHF stations (channels 2-13); those being WNYW-TV 5 in New York City; KTTV-TV 11 in Los Angeles, CA; WTTG-TV 5 in Washington, D.C. and KSTU-TV 13 in Salt Lake City, UT — the former three tracing their roots back to the old DuMont

network and later the old Metromedia group that was eventually purchased by Rupert Murdoch to form the basis for the FOX network. Most of their O&O's and affiliates were on UHF channels 14-69; which had lower radiated power transmission and little to no history with any of the major networks. Thus, while FOX prepared to bring in the big names needed to make an immediate splash with their newly-acquired NFL coverage (luring CBS castoffs Pat Summerall, John Madden, Dick Stockton, Tim Ryan, James Brown, Terry Bradshaw and Matt Millen as well as longtime CBS behind-the-scenes personnel such as producer Bob Stenner and director Sandy Grossman while also adding young broadcasters with famous fathers such as Joe Buck {son of Jack}; Thom Brenneman {son of Marty} and Kenny Albert {son of Marv} and completing their pregame show team with the additions of recently retired Los Angeles Raiders defensive end Howie Long and Jimmy Johnson, having just been given the boot after leading the Dallas Cowboys to back-to-back Super Bowl championships due to feuding with owner Jerry Jones); the network also sought to upgrade its station profile, particularly in markets with NFC teams.

The first ripples began in March 1994; when FOX launched a joint venture with Savoy Pictures, a minority-owned firm led by chairmen Victor Kaufman and Lewis Korman who served as majority owners of the new venture, called SF Broadcasting (had any voting stock been held by FOX; News Corporation would have had the stations involved counted against the FCC ownership limit of 12); though News Corporation did provide $58.5 million of the $100 million in capital. We'll return to this a little later, but this was followed shortly afterwards by FOX purchasing a 20% stake (worth $500 million) in New World Communications. New World Pictures, as the firm was originally known, had started off as a low-budget film company before expanding into television with shows such as "Santa Barbara"; "Crime Story";

“Rags to Riches” and most notably “The Wonder Years” and had just entered television ownership a year earlier when New World owner Ron Perelman bought 51% of the Denver-based broadcast company SCI Television from Gillett Holdings for $100 million plus $63 million in newly-issued debt (SCI itself traced its roots back to the old Storer Communications); and just weeks before this New World had picked up 4 stations from Argyle Television Holdings (which that firm had bought in 1993 from Times Mirror) for $717 million in a purchase-option structured deal; and 3 weeks later adding 4 more stations from Great American Communications (formed of the remnants of the old Taft Broadcasting firm, would eventually be renamed Citicasters following its own corporate restructuring) for $350 million cash and $10 million share warrants. Upon FOX’s partial acquisition, there would be a multi-year affiliation agreement to switch to FOX once the individual affiliation contracts expired. The stations connected to the deal included…

- KNSD-TV 39 ({"cable 7"}; San Diego, CA; NBC {since 1977; previously ABC}; New World)
- WAGA-TV 5 (Atlanta, GA; CBS; New World)
- WITI-TV 6 (Milwaukee, WI; CBS {since 1977; previously ABC}; New World)
- WJBK-TV 2 (Detroit, MI; CBS; New World)
- WJW-TV 8 (Cleveland, OH; CBS {WJKW from 1977-85}; New World)
- WSBK-TV 38 (Boston, MA; independent; New World)
- WTVT-TV 13 (Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL; CBS; New World)
- KDFW-TV 4 (Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; CBS {KRLD until 1970}; Argyle)
- KTBC-TV 7 (Austin,TX; CBS {once owned by the family of President Lyndon B. Johnson}; Argyle)

- KTVI-TV 2 (St. Louis, MO; ABC {highest-rated ABC station at the time}; Argyle)
- WVTM-TV 13 (Birmingham, AL; NBC; Argyle)
- KSAZ-TV 10 (Phoenix, AZ; CBS {had just changed call letters from KTSP earlier that year; original KOOL until 1982}; Great American/Citicasters)
- WBRC-TV 6 (Birmingham, AL; ABC; Great American/Citicasters)
- WDAF-TV 4 (Kansas City, MO; NBC; Great American/Citicasters)
- WGHP-TV 8 (High Point, NC; ABC; Great American/Citicasters)

Obviously, not all these stations would become part of FOX in any fashion. KNSD and WVTM were kept by New World (in San Diego - an AFC market as the home of the Chargers at the time, FOX already had a VHF station in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico-based XETV-TV 6 {later CW; now affiliated with Mexican network Canal 5 and targeting Tijuana as opposed to San Diego}) until being sold to NBC in 1996 (WVTM would be sold to Media General along with three other small-to-medium size markets O&O's {WJAR-TV 10 in Providence, RI; WCMH-TV 4 in Columbus, OH and WNCN-TV 17 in Raleigh-Durham, NC; the latter three acquired via NBC's 1996 purchase of the Outlet Company} in 2006; then in 2014 when Media General announced its merger with LIN Media {owner of Birmingham CBS affiliate WIAT-TV 42}; Media General decided to keep WIAT — which it would have had to sell in order to acquire WVTM — to Hearst Television). Meanwhile, with a maximum of 12 stations allowed to be owned by a single company (and no duopolies permitted at the time); New World (with which the Argyle and Citicasters deals added to the 7 stations they already had giving them 15) set a trust company as it prepared to sell WGHP and WBRC (per the deal New World owned those station's licenses while Citicasters operated the stations; eventually Criticasters transferred operation to FOX Television Stations in April 1995; and on July 22, 1995

FOX purchased those stations outright in exchange for $130 million in promissory notes). In Boston — an AFC market as the home market of the New England Patriots — FOX decided to repurchase WFXT-TV 25; its original FOX station from 1987-89 (owned via cross-ownership waiver; the only way News Corp could own both the station and the Boston Herald newspaper; verboten otherwise per FCC rules); when that station was sold to the NBA's Boston Celtics. New World ultimately sent WSBK to Paramount Stations Group; which ultimately made WSBK a charter UPN affiliate. Finally, Citicasters elected to keep WTSP-TV 10 (the ABC affiliate in the Tampa-St. Petersburg region) and WKRC-TV 12 in Cincinnati, OH (that city's ABC affiliate and an AFC market — home of the Bengals). New World kept WTVT due to having higher viewership and a coverage area that, unlike WTSP, included Sarasota (the WTSP transmitter was short-spaced to prevent interfering with Miami ABC affiliate WPLG; forcing ABC to retain an affiliation with WWSB-TV 40 to cover Sarasota and the southern part of the Tampa area). WXIX-TV 19, the incumbent FOX station, was left alone, as though it was a UHF station it was much more competitive in Cincinnati than the Queen City's other independent option, WSTR-TV 64.

Coming back to SF Broadcasting, shortly after the New World deal was made; SF Broadcasting picked up 4 stations owned by Burnham Broadcasting, all NBC affiliates except for one ABC affiliate. Those were…

- KHON-TV 2 (Honolulu, HI; NBC; Burnham)
- WALA-TV 10 (Mobile, AL; NBC; Burnham)
- WLUK-TV 11 (Green Bay, WI; NBC {from 1954-59 and since 1983; ABC from 1959-83}; Burnham)
- WVUE-TV 8 (New Orleans, LA; ABC; Burnham)

This proceeded to give FOX VHF stations in 11 of the 15 NFC markets (these deals coincided with the expansion of the NFL to 30 teams with the NFC's Carolina Panthers {based in Charlotte, NC save for their inaugural season in 1995; when they played their home games at Clemson Stadium while their own stadium was finishing construction} and AFC's Jacksonville Jaguars); but on September 23 NBC cried foul, petitioning the FCC to challenge the WLUK purchase on grounds SF Broadcasting was a shell corporation to bypass FCC limits on capital that a foreign company can invest in an American station. By February 1995, NBC withdrew the petition, with the acquisition approved on April 27, 1995 only to be dealt to Silver King Communications — owned by former FOX executive Barry Diller — 9 months later. Prior to the moves; the only NFC markets with FOX stations on a VHF affiliate were the aforementioned WNYW in New York; KTTV in Los Angeles; WTTG in Washington and San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose FOX affiliate KTVU-TV 2 (owned by Cox Enterprises; which kept the station until selling to FOX in 2014), though between awaiting FCC approval and the expiration of affiliation contracts; many of the lame duck stations would gradually shift affiliations over the ensuing two years (as a preview, ABC affiliate KARD-TV 14 in Monroe, LA jumped to FOX in an unrelated deal, while El Centro, CA/Yuma, AZ CBS affiliate KECY-TV 9 also flipped in a separate deal)

3. THE SHIFTS BEGIN AND THE DOMINOES BEGIN TO FALL

The first official shifts began in September 5, 1994; when Cleveland CBS affiliate WJW-TV 8 officially joined FOX while CBS ended up moving to WOIO-TV 19; the previous FOX affiliate. Similarly on September 12; Kansas City saw NBC affiliate WDAF-TV 4 and FOX station KSHB-TV 41 switch networks. But a good number of the affiliation changes would prove far more complicated that those

mentioned.

First, with FOX's impending move to Cleveland's WJW and WJBK in Detroit; CBS began making efforts to flip ABC affiliates WEWS-TV 5 in Cleveland and WXYZ-TV 7 in Detroit to the Eye; a move that would have been a major blow to ABC, as both were among the stronger affiliates of the network — and in the case of WXYZ; a former ABC O&O until the network sold it to avoid going over the station limits following ABC being acquired by Capital Cities in 1985. However, on June 16, 1994 ABC renewed its affiliation with WEWS and WXYZ in exchange for those stations' owner, Scripps-Howard Broadcasting, to switch 4 other stations to ABC. Those were…

- WMAR-TV 2 (Baltimore, MD; NBC {since 1981; previously CBS — longtime market also-ran}; Scripps-Howard)
- WCPO-TV 9 (Cincinnati, OH; CBS {since 1961; when that station and ABC affiliate WKRC swapped affiliations}; Scripps-Howard)
- KNXV-TV 15 (Phoenix, AZ; FOX {lame-duck — scheduled to lose FOX to KSAZ-TV 10}; Scripps-Howard)
- WFTS-TV 28 (Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL; FOX {lame-duck — scheduled to lose FOX to WTVT-TV 13}; Scripps-Howard)

Even with the Scripps-Howard deal; ABC was concerned enough about a possible WXYZ switch to buy two stations from SJL Broadcast Management (eventually acquired by Lilly Broadcasting LLC; with SJL remaining as a subsidiary) for $155 million in order to cover the Detroit market in case there were no other options in the city itself should CBS have acquired WXYZ when the deal closed in August 1995. Those two were…

- WJRT-TV 12 (Flint, MI; ABC; SJL Broadcast Management)

- WTVG-TV 13 (Toledo, OH; NBC {formerly WPSD until 1978 and a former ABC affiliate from 1958-70; NBC affiliation contract didn't run out until November 1}; SJL Broadcast Management)

The side effects of those deals resulted in NBC moving to the station abandoned by ABC, WNWO-TV 24, in Toledo; while NBC, following the WJRT purchase and CBS moving their affiliation in Flint to NBC station WNEM-TV 5; in part as a move similar to the WJRT move by ABC, leaving the displaced Peacock to move down the dial to WEYI-TV 25.

4. DETROIT, MILWAUKEE, SOUTH BEND AND ATLANTA: FINDING REPLACEMENTS BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT THAN EXPECTED

With the events listed as part of the Cleveland and Detroit shuffles; CBS began desperately making offers to the other Detroit stations in hopes that it would flip over. The other stations looked at were...

- WDIV-TV 4 (Detroit, MI; NBC {previously WWJ-TV until 1978}; Post-Newsweek)
- WXON-TV 20 (Detroit, MI; independent/PTEN {Prime Time Entertainment Network; channel 62 until 1972}; Washtenaw Broadcasting {?})
- WADL-TV 30 (Mount Clemens {just outside of Detroit}, MI; independent {had occasionally showed CBS programs pre-empted by WJBK}; Adell Broadcasting)
- WKBD-TV 50 (Detroit, MI; FOX {soon to lose its affiliation to WJBK}; Paramount Stations)
- WGPR-TV 62 (Detroit, MI; independent; WGPR Inc.)

WDIV, not surprisingly, stuck with top-rated NBC; while WXON and WKBD were scheduled to join the soon-to-launch WB and UPN networks, respectively. WADL - only 5 years old at this point and little-known to Motor City viewers - entered talks only for CBS to balk at the demands of the station's owner, Franklin Adell. Finally, with desperation setting in CBS agreed to negotiate with WGPR. WGPR's reception was notably poor (broadcasting at 800,000 watts; just over half the wattage of WXON {1.5 million watts} and almost a third of the wattage for WKBD {2.3 million watts}); with it being able to be picked up only in the city proper and a handful of suburbs. CBS also entered deals to provide at least Grade "B" coverage to the northern suburbs. First, in Bay City, MI CBS was able to convince that city's NBC affiliate, WNEM-TV 5, to switch affiliations as part of a multi-station deal with Meredith Corporation. Meanwhile; much like what ABC had done in considering piping in a Toledo, OH station as insurance in case CBS flipped WXYZ; CBS extended their affiliation with Toledo's CBS affiliate, WTOL-TV 11, which also provided Grade B coverage to Detroit and the surrounding area. Finally, CBS convinced their Lansing, MI affiliate - WLNS-TV 6 - to add a translator in Ann Arbor, MI. Finally, with days to go before the switch was to officially take place; CBS made a last-minute agreement to buy WGPR for just $24 million.

There was an additional hurdle to deal with; as in addition to WGPR's poor signal, an extremely shoe-string budget (the station still used art cards instead of CGI graphics; while also using a character generator that had been manufactured in the 1970s) and position way down the dial, CBS had to deal with local opposition from the black community in Detroit; as WGPR was the nation's first black-owned station when it signed on in 1975 under the ownership of several black members of a Detroit Masonic Lodge; and needless to say, the possibility of losing a black-owned station in a city with a large black

population didn't sit well with many community leaders who wouldn't have minded if the station had simply become a CBS affiliate. A group called Spectrum Detroit, led by Lansing-based real estate investor Joel Ferguson, made a counter-offer to buy the station or at least force a joint-ownership venture with CBS; and when that failed the group sued to block the sale. CBS began an ad blitz featuring Bill Cosby (long before the skeletons began tumbling out of the closet with him) attempting to get viewers to tune to the little-watched station. It would ultimately take a court ruling in CBS' favor for the network to complete the purchase of the station, which was renamed WWJ-TV 62 after the then-CBS owned radio station WWJ-AM 950 in July 1995 (incidentally; WWJ was the original call letters of WDIV until 1978).

Milwaukee had a nearly-identical situation. The three stations at the center of the battle there were...

- WITI-TV 6 (CBS {having become a CBS affiliate when WISN became the ABC affiliate in 1977; itself reversing a swap from 1961}; New World Communications)
- WVCY-TV 30 (independent; VCY America)
- WDJT-TV 58 (independent; Weigel Broadcasting)

With WITI set to flip to FOX as part of the New World Communications deal; CBS approached the major stations (NBC affiliate WTMJ-TV 4; ABC affiliate WISN-TV 12; independent station WVTV-TV 18 {a station owned by Gaylord Broadcasting and which would flip two other independents to CBS in Dallas-Fort Worth and Seattle-Tacoma; more on those later} and lame-duck FOX affiliate WCGV-TV 24); all of whom turned CBS down, forcing CBS to negotiate with the aforementioned WDJT and WVCY after initial attempts to negotiate with another small-time independent in WJJA-TV 49 fell

through. WVCY - owned by evangelical Christian broadcaster Vic Eliason's VCY America ministry - quickly rejected CBS' $10 million offer in September 1994. With time running short and CBS facing having to pipe in either Madison CBS affiliate WISC-TV 3 or nearby O&O's WFRV-TV 5 in Green Bay, WI or WBBM-TV 2 in Chicago, IL on cable as a stop-gap, CBS - more out of desperation than anything else - announced a deal with WDJT, which became a CBS affiliate effective December 11, 1994, with CBS News Sunday Morning the first CBS show to air on the station. This was in spite of the fact that, like WWJ, WDJT didn't have a news department at the time (though in early 1992; WDJT carried full coverage of the criminal trial of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer while allowing WITI not to have to pre-empt regular CBS programming) and had only recently gained carriage on major carriers such as Marcus Cable (since absorbed into Charter Communications).

Moving now to Atlanta; where the stations at the heart of the affiliation situation there were…

- WAGA-TV 5 (CBS; New World Communications)
- WATL-TV 36 (FOX {had just become a FOX O&O a year earlier following the network purchasing the station from Renaissance Broadcasting}; FOX Television Stations)
- WGNX-TV 46 (independent; Tribune Communications {which acquired the station from televangelist Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network in 1983})
- WVEU-TV 69 (independent; Broadcast Corporation of Georgia)

Under the New World Communications deal; FOX was set to move from WATL to WAGA; with CBS moving down to WGNX (which due to parent company Tribune being part of the joint venture with Time Warner to create the WB network was originally set to join that

network) and WATL becoming an independent; thus sparking another mad scramble for a replacement. CBS first approached market-leader WSB-TV 2 (the local ABC station) and NBC affiliate WXIA-TV 11 (which had temporarily retired its popular “11 Alive” branding; those stations had been part of the only other major affiliation swap in Atlanta in 1980 — when WSB dumped then-last place NBC for ABC, which had been #1 for most of the late 1970s) only for Cox Enterprises and Gannett respectively to enter long-term deals with ABC and NBC, respectively. WATL was briefly approached only for Quest Broadcasting (a joint venture involving Tribune; famed music producer Quincy Jones; Willie Davis, the great Green Bay Packers defensive end during the Vince Lombardi glory years of the 1960s; talk-show host Geraldo Rivera and former Soul Train host Don Cornelius) to buy the station that November from FOX as part of a 2-station deal; during which it would become the WB affiliate in Atlanta. Facing a prospect of having to pipe in affiliates from Columbus, GA (WRBL-TV 3); Macon, GA (WMAZ-TV 13); Spartanburg, SC (WSPA-TV 7) and as far as Chattanooga, TN (WDEF-TV 12), CBS agreed to buy WVEU-TV 69 on the very end of the dial for $46 million on September 26, 1994; a move clearly intended as a stop-gap until CBS could find a higher-profile station (WVEU had in the past been used as a dumping ground for shows other stations didn't want; including WAGA dumping CBS' historically moribund morning shows on the station between 1986-94, causing Prentis Rogers in a 1991 article for the Atlanta Constitution to call it the city's “quicker picker-upper”). During this period; CBS entered negotiations with WGNX — who had as one thing in their favor being the only non-Big 3 station with an operating news division — before Tribune agreed to flip WGNX to CBS in late November (with CBS selling WVEU from Broadcasting Corporation of Georgia to Viacom for $27 million while also unloading Shreveport, LA CBS affiliate KSLA-TV 12 to Ellis Communications (a firm owned by Atlanta businessman Bert

Ellis) to comply with FCC regulations related to Viacom unloading its network-affiliated stations (more on those when we cover the DFW Metroplex; St. Louis and Seattle). KSLA remains a CBS affiliate to this day; though from January-August 1995 the station would take on a secondary affiliation with UPN; while the affiliation changes officially took effect on December 11, 1994; with FOX officially moving to WAGA; CBS to WGNX (whose first broadcast under the new affiliation was CBS News Sunday Morning) and WATL becoming an independent until the WB launched on January 11, 1995 while five days later WVEU officially joined UPN. One curious post-script involving WGNX was that it still had a large number of syndicated broadcasts (at that time including reruns of Doogie Howser, M.D.; The Cosby Show; Star Trek: The Next Generation and Roseanne) that — with the additional network programming — it no longer had space to air. Solution: Dump most of those on the station CBS owned for roughly 2 months: WVEU; while a few other shows previously on WGNX were scooped up by WATL. However, like WWJ and WDJT; CBS would also be hampered by the mountainous terrain covering the northern part of the Atlanta market; thus making WGNX unable to cover that area despite a 5,000,000 watt signal (and to make matters worse; much of that area marked the few remaining areas in the U.S. where cable wasn’t readily available yet), leading to WNEG-TV 32 in Toccoa, GA (mainly part of the market ranging from Greenville and Spartanburg, SC as well as Asheville, NC) flipping from an independent to CBS that August. Interestingly, in June 2025 CBS announced that their affiliation would move from channel 46 – now known as WANF – to what was now WUPA-TV 69 effective on August 16, 2025; thus resulting in CBS making that station an owned-and-operated station over 3 decades after they originally would have had what was then WGNX not been available.

Finally in this section; we turn to South Bend, IN (in an NFL-

related connection; South Bend and parts of northern Indiana were often considered secondary markets for the Chicago Bears); where FOX was seeking to move up in this case to a full-power station; having previously aired on W58BT. Unlike most of the examples depicted; a CBS affiliate was not caught up in the shuffle. What it did have in common was a limited number of options and a Christian ministry (in this case; World Harvest Television — the ministry founded by South Bend evangelist Lester Sumrall. Note that unlike WVCY in Milwaukee; Sumrall's station WHME-TV 46 carried a mix of religious and family-oriented general entertainment programming akin to the stations that had been owned by Pat Robertson) owned station that would be approached. With CBS affiliate WSBT-TV 22 firmly committed to the Tiffany Network and NBC affiliate WNDU-TV 16 (then owned by the University of Notre Dame) likewise staying put; the stations involved included…

- WSJV-TV 28 (ABC; Quincy Newspapers)
- WHME-TV 46 (World Harvest Television; LeSEA Broadcasting)
- W58BT-TV 58 (sometimes referring to itself as WBND; had just signed on in 1990) (FOX; Weigel Broadcasting)

FOX signed an affiliation deal with WSJV to switch from ABC effective April 21, 1995 and with all other options seemingly exhausted when WHME said "no deal" it looked like ABC — much like CBS in Milwaukee — would have to pipe in cable outlets such as Chicago O&O WLS-TV 7 and Battle Creek, MI affiliate WOTV-TV 41. However, again like Milwaukee, Weigel came to the rescue by reaching an affiliation deal between W58BT and ABC; with the switch taking effect on October 18, 1995 (Weigel wanted to switch in December in order to get a stronger transmitter ready but ABC demanded a switch the same day WSJV went to FOX; resulting in a partial failure of the 2,000 watt

transmitter the morning of the switch) and by the end of 1995 officially was renamed WBND.

5. MORE DIFFICULTIES: TAMPA-ST. PETERSBURG; DALLAS-FORT WORTH; SEATTLE AND ST. LOUIS

Our next block of switch stories involves the Tampa-St. Petersburg; Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex; Seattle and St. Louis markets — the latter three of which were all connected together. First, we look at the Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL market. This involved yet another NFC market with a New World-owned station; in this case the team impacted was the also-ran Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Stations involved were…

- WTSP-TV 10 (ABC; Citicasters)
- WTVT-TV 13 (CBS; New World Communications)
- WFTS-TV 28 (FOX; Scripps-Howard)
- WWSB-TV 40 (ABC {licensed to Sarasota, FL and used as the affiliate of the southern part of the Tampa-St. Petersburg region due to short-spacing to prevent WTSP's signal from interfering with Miami ABC affiliate WPLG}; Calkins Media)

The situation here was a perfect storm of both the New World/FOX deal and Scripps-Howard's deal with ABC where ABC would move their affiliation to four Scripps stations (WFTS included even though that station lacked a news department at the time - though a planned 10:00 newscast late in its time with FOX never materialized) in exchange for keeping ABC on Scripps-owned WEWS in Cleveland and WXYZ in Detroit; resulting in longtime Tampa ABC affiliate WTSP getting the short end of the sticks here. However, this also provided an opportunity for CBS, who soon reached a deal to join WTSP; with CBS

moving to WTSP from WTVT; WTVT joining FOX and ABC moving to WFTS effective December 12, 1994. Unaffected were independent station WTOG-TV 44 (set to join UPN) and NBC affiliate and market leader WFLA-TV 8; while ABC initially announced they would terminate their affiliation with WWSB in a letter dated September 27, 1994; with the affiliation set to expire on April 2, 1995. However, WWSB successfully petitioned the FCC to keep the affiliation; which they retain to this day.

Turning to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex; where — in the home market of the 2-time defending Super Bowl champion Dallas Cowboys — there was plenty of shuffling that took time to resolve itself; as the affiliation contracts for the involved stations expired in July 1995. Stations involved in this deal were…

- KDFW-TV 4 (CBS; New World Communications {which bought out the stations owned by Argyle {KDFW; KTBC-TV 7 in Austin; KTVI-TV 2 in St. Louis and WVTM-TV 13 in Birmingham} after Argyle had just acquired those stations from Times-Mirror the previous year}. As KRLD; the station had served as the hub of CBS News coverage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy {notably; then New Orleans bureau chief Dan Rather — by this time co-anchor of the CBS Evening News {this was during the ill-fated pairing with Connie Chung that lasted just 2 years from 1993-95 before Rather resumed his previous position as solo anchor} — helmed much of the on-the-scene coverage of the assassination and aftermath {Rather having learned of the shooting en route to take film of an interview with FDR's first Vice-President/former Speaker of the House John Nance Garner on Garner's 95th birthday to be developed for a scheduled story on that night's CBS Evening News; with one of JFK's last acts

being to wish "Cactus Jack" a happy birthday})

- KTVT-TV 11 (Independent; Gaylord Broadcasting)
- KDAF-TV 33 (FOX; FOX Television Stations {original O&O; briefly owned by CBN until a 1973 swap with Doubleday Broadcasting that saw CBN acquired what was KDTV-TV 39})
- KXTX-TV 39 (Independent; Christian Broadcasting Network {the last remaining station owned by CBN after their other stations were sold off by the late 1980s} but having entered a local marketing agreement between LIN Broadcasting {owner of local NBC affiliate KXAS-TV 5})

With FOX set to move to KDFW as soon as its affiliation with CBS expired; KTVT was originally set to become the affiliate for the upstart WB; only for Gaylord Broadcasting to enter a deal with CBS (after a brief attempt to flip longtime market leader WFAA-TV 8, the local ABC affiliate, only for Belo Corporation to reach a deal with ABC that renewed the affiliation of both WFAA and Norfolk, VA-area ABC affiliate WVEC-TV 13) to switch KTVT to CBS in exchange for KSTW, also an independent on channel 11 owned by Gaylord in the Seattle-Tacoma region to CBS (in the process displacing longtime Seattle CBS affiliate KIRO-TV 7; more on that later). After the WB's majority owner Time Warner filed an injunction trying to end its agreement with KTVT, KSTW and Houston station KHTV-TV 39 (which due to the injunction would not become a WB affiliate until the summer of 1995; making Houston the only Top 10 market without a WB affiliate on its launch date of January 16, 1995) before ultimately deciding to move their affiliation to KDAF upon FOX selling the station (Renaissance Broadcasting would eventually acquire KDAF). However, the unexpired agreements would force the WB to enter a temporary affiliation with KXTX until the affiliation deals expired; after which KXTX reverted to an independent.

Turning to the Pacific Northwest; let's take a look at the situation in Seattle (home to the Seattle Seahawks, then an AFC team {though having entered the league as an NFC team in 1976; Seattle would move back to the NFC in 2002 as part of the realignment following the expansion Houston Texans making their debut that season}). As mentioned earlier, this contained one of the two ripple effects involving the Gaylord-CBS deal in Big D. Unlike the other examples, this was initially a straight up and down swap; but other developments would prove far more complex. The stations involved were…

- KIRO-TV 7 (CBS; Belo Corporation {which had just purchased KIRO from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints-owned Bonneville International 2 days before this deal was announced})
- KSTW-TV 11 (Independent {had previously had two affiliation stints with CBS from 1953-58 and 1960-62 before KIRO became the sole CBS affiliate for the entire area}; Gaylord Broadcasting)

Shortly after the deal was announced (itself after the Mormon-owned Bonneville International sold KIRO-TV to Belo while retaining KIRO-AM 710); Belo announced plans to make KIRO a news-heavy independent (akin to the Sunbeam-owned stations WSVN {the FOX affiliate in Miami} and Boston independent station WHDH) before agreeing to flip to UPN effective March 13, 1995 (CBS had targeted KSTW as a replacement due in part to its previous history as well as KSTW being the only non-Big 3 station with a news department) while the WB — which per the original Gaylord deal with Time Warner was supposed to affiliate here with KSTW — ended up going to KTZZ-TV 22.

The affiliation deal was supposed to last 10 years between KSTW and CBS; but late in 1996 two developments triggered the makings of a complicated trade involving several markets. The first domino

toppled came when Belo merged with The Providence Journal Company; which owned Seattle NBC affiliate KING-TV 5. With no duopolies allowed then, Belo would have to give up either KING or KIRO. Weeks later; Gaylord — citing disappointing financial numbers — announced KSTW was up for sale (eventually being acquired by Cox Broadcasting; with the deal finalized on May 30, 1997). Meanwhile; Paramount Stations Group prepared to unload their last non-UPN stations acquired from Viacom; among them…

- WVIT-TV 30 (NBC; Hartford-New Haven, CT)
- KMOV-TV 4 (CBS; St. Louis, MO {originally CBS O&O KMOX until CBS had to sell the station to relieve debt from fighting off a hostile takeover attempt by Ted Turner in 1985})

With WVIT already being sold to NBC; this set up a three-way trade where Paramount sent KMOV to Belo in exchange for KIRO; which would then be dealt to Cox for KSTW and $70 million, a deal finalized on June 2, 1997. Four weeks later; KSTW officially became a UPN O&O station while CBS returned to KIRO.

St. Louis, meanwhile, would find themselves in a two-way swap that had major implications for the FOX Kids after-school lineup at the peak of its popularity. Stations involved were…

- KTVI-TV 2 (ABC; New World Communications {see KDFW for details})
- KDNL-TV 30 (FOX; River City Broadcasting {a locally-owned group started by two former KPLR employees})

With KTVI's affiliation with ABC not set to expire until July 1, 1995; ABC had time to find a replacement but not many options

(KSDK’s owner, Multimedia Broadcasting {which was about to be swallowed up by Gannett} had a long-time deal with NBC; KMOV — then owned by Viacom — likewise was sticking with CBS; KPLR — the most successful independent station in the area — was approached by ABC but rejected the offer to join the WB; KNLC-TV 24 {owned by the New Life Evangelistic Center; more on them a little later} turned ABC down {as they would UPN, forcing UPN to go without an affiliate of its own — settling for taking a position as a secondary affiliation for KDNL — in the Gateway to the West for its first several months of existence} and WHSL-TV 46 {affiliated with the Home Shopping Network} did likewise; forcing ABC almost by default to move their programming to KNDL; with the swap taking effect on August 7, 1995 (incidentally; by the time this swap took effect, St. Louis — which had not been the home to an NFL team since the NFL’s Cardinals moved to Arizona in 1988 — would be the new home of the Rams after moving from Los Angeles {technically, nearby Anaheim}; where they remained until moving back to L.A. after the 2015 season).

The speed bump here involves the FOX Kids block. As most of its fellow New World Communications stations would; KTVI had no desire to keep that block, preferring to use their timeslots no longer occupied by network programs for additional newscasts even though St. Louis had the 2nd largest FOX Kids Club (behind Cleveland's original FOX affiliate WOIO; which had already traded affiliations with former CBS affiliate WJW by this time). However as a result of the affiliation shuffle; the FOX Kids block (though still having strong ratings with the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers; Bobby’s World; Eek! The Cat and The Tick; the block had already impacted by the debut of the WB; which took the Warner Bros. cartoons such as Animaniacs and Batman: The Animated Series {plus repeats of Tiny Toon Adventures — which had already ended its run} with them to form the Kids’ WB block that September)

ended up going to KNLC, which carried the programs very reluctantly and refused to sell local advertisements during the block on weekdays and Saturdays; replacing slots that would normally have been local commercials with public service announcements by that church's pastor, Rev. Larry Rice, on hot-button issues such as abortion and capital punishment — not exactly topics one would expect to see discussed while waiting for Bobby's World to come back from commercial. It didn't take long for word to make it to corporate headquarters at FOX's then-parent News Corporation; which eventually pulled FOX Kids from KNLC effective September 1996; with KTVI essentially forced to run the block (thus making KTVI the only New World-owned FOX affiliate to run the network's kids block); which KTVI would continue to do with FOX Kids and successor 4KidsTV until FOX got out of the fading network children's programming scene in December 2008.

6. BIRMINGHAM; PIEDMONT TRIAD AND PHOENIX: A SWITCH THAT BUYS ABC TIME AND ONE RESULTING IN SOUR GRAPES

Without question, the most complicated situation in this game of network affiliation musical chairs concerned Birmingham, AL along with nearby Tuscaloosa and Anniston (made into separate media markets by Nielsen in 1977). A whopping 6 stations — one which hadn't yet signed on when the dominoes began falling — in that area were involved plus ripple effects in a market several hundred miles away in the Greensboro-High Point-Winston Salem, NC area. The Birmingham-area stations involved were…

- WBRC-TV 6 (ABC; Birmingham, AL; New World Communications {which purchased the station from Citicasters just weeks before the affiliation deal with FOX was announced})

- WTTO-TV 21 (FOX; Birmingham, AL; Sinclair Broadcast Group {recently merged with previous owner Abry Communications})
- WDBB-TV 17 (FOX; Tuscaloosa, AL; Sinclair Broadcast Group {recently merged with previous owner Abry Communications} — satellite of WTTO since 1991)
- WCFT-TV 33 (CBS; Tuscaloosa, AL; Federal Broadcasting)
- WJSU-TV 40 (ABC; Anniston, AL; Osborne Communications Corporation)
- WNAL-TV 44 (FOX; Gadsden-Anniston, AL; Sinclair Broadcast Group {recently merged with previous owner Abry Communications} — satellite of WTTO since 1991)
- W58CK-LP 58 (Independent; Birmingham, AL; Shirley James {signed on in November 1994)

Here's where the whole mess gets started. As mentioned earlier; WBRC was one of four stations (WDAF-TV 4 in Kansas City and two stations in markets we'll cover later in this segment: WGHP-TV 8 in the Piedmont Triad of North Carolina and KSAZ-TV 15 in Phoenix, AZ) New World picked up from Citicasters. Three weeks later; New World picked up four stations from Argyle (KDFW-TV 4 in Dallas-Fort Worth; KTBC-TV 7 in Austin; KTVI-TV 2 in St. Louis and another station in Birmingham; NBC affiliate WVTM-TV 13 in a purchase-option structured deal worth $717 million). However, this created two problems for New World. One; since the FCC didn't allow duopolies at the time the company had to decide which station (WBRC or WVTM) to keep. Also; the two deals would result in New World Communications owning 15 stations, whereas then the maximum number of stations one group could own was 12. Something had to give; and while waiting for the Argyle purchase to be submitted, New World officially acquired WBRC on October 12, 1994. However, when Citicasters got word of the planned Argyle purchase, Citicasters called an audible and decided to sell

WBRC and WGHP directly to FOX. In January 1995; New World took control of operations for the former Argyle stations (WVTM among them) via time brokerage agreements. The WBRC/WGHP trust transfer took effect on April 3, 1995 while the three Argyle stations directly impacted by the buyout by New World closed 11 days later; with the remaining 3 stations added four days later. The change of plans also resulted in WVTM and another New World-owned station; KNSD-TV 39 ("cable 7") in San Diego, CA, keeping their NBC affiliations; and by mid-1996; WVTM and KNSD would be sold to NBC, thus making those stations owned-and-operated stations.

There was one other issue which wasn't a speed bump as much as a mountain in the road for FOX — as though they now owned WBRC; ABC's affiliation contract would not expire until August 31, 1996, a situation that — unlike the situation CBS found themselves in regarding Milwaukee, for instance — was somewhat fortunate for ABC in that it bought some time to find a replacement. ABC first attempted to negotiate with WTTO, only for that to fall through due in no small measure to the fact that Sinclair was unwilling to start a news department for WTTO; while ABC wanted a station with a news division to move their affiliation to. ABC then turned their attention to Birmingham CBS affiliate WBMG-TV 42 (owned by Park Communications); a local also-ran that — despite a new tower built in 1974 — had such a weak signal that it barely had any coverage outside the city of Birmingham proper (so bad was the signal that when cable first came to Birmingham later in the 1970s; cable providers in the western and eastern parts of the market refused to carry WBMG; thus resulting in CBS retaining WCFT and WJSU) and by the 1990s WBMG was ahead of only one independent: WABM way down the dial on channel 68. ABC at one point went so far as to offer to buy the station, only for WBMG's parent company Park Communications to sign a long-

term affiliation deal with CBS.

Then a light bulb went off at ABC. In January 1996; ABC entered talks with Allbritton Communications — which had just purchased WCFT from Federal Broadcasting two months earlier and that January had entered a local marketing agreement with Osborne Communications-owned WJSU (with an option to buy that station outright) — about affiliating with those stations (Allbritton also owned one of the network's strongest affiliates in Allbritton flagship WJLA-TV 7 in Washington, D.C.). By April; Allbritton entered a 10-year affiliation deal with ABC that renewed the affiliation of their three other ABC affiliates in addition to WJLA while two others flipped to the network. Those stations were…

- WJLA-TV 7 (ABC; Washington, D.C.)
- KATV-TV 7 (ABC; Little Rock, AR {incidentally; also covered then-President Bill Clinton's hometown of Hope, AR})
- KTUL-TV 8 (ABC; Tulsa, OK)
- WHTM-TV 27 (ABC; Harrisburg, PA)
- WCIV-TV 4 (NBC; Charleston, SC)
- WBSG-TV 24 (WB; Brunswick, GA-Jacksonville, FL)

However, while this gave ABC coverage in Birmingham; Nielsen wouldn't have counted either station in its ratings for the market due to both Tuscaloosa and Anniston being considered separate markets at that time. This development led to Allbritton buying W58CK; a low-power independent station on the air for just over a year at that point, renaming it WBMA and thus creating an outlet that would count as an official station for Birmingham. Thus when the affiliation changes officially took effect on September 1, 1996; WCFT and WJSU were turned into full-power satellites of WBMA (though using the branding

ABC 33/40 — the WCFT and WJSU channel numbers); FOX officially moved to WBRC and WBMG becoming the sole central Alabama CBS station. Finally; the wild situation led to Nielsen officially folding Tuscaloosa and Anniston back into the fast-growing Birmingham media market proper starting during the 1998-99 season. As a postscript; WTTO/WDBB — the previous FOX stations in Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, respectively — briefly became independents (with WDBB eventually turning into a full-time repeater) before joining the WB in February 1997; while shortly after the Tuscaloosa and Anniston markets were folded back into Birmingham by Nielsen; WNAL eventually was picked up by Paxson Communications to become the market's new station for the family-oriented PAX network (now Ion Media Networks and Ion Television; respectively).

Back to the markets with NFL ties; in this case the Piedmont Trial of Greensboro-High Point-Winston-Salem, NC; a secondary market to the newly-formed (and officially Charlotte-based) Carolina Panthers. Stations impacted were…

- WGHP-TV 8 (ABC; New World Communications {which purchased the station from Citicasters just weeks before the affiliation deal with FOX was announced})
- WNRW-TV 45 (FOX; Abry Communications {recently merged with Act III Broadcasting; which would eventually merge into Sinclair Broadcast Group})

WGHP (along with WBRC as mentioned earlier) were intended to be sold by New World to FOX directly to avoid going over the FCC ownership cap. Additionally, continued questions over the American citizenship of Australian-born News Corporation CEO Rupert Murdoch (who had become a naturalized citizen in 1985; shortly before the

launch of the FOX network. This is worth noting because legally only American citizens are allowed to own television stations in the United States) surfaced; thus preventing an immediate acquisition of WGHP; WBRC and a similar deal involving Communications Corporation of America (or ComCorp)-owned Memphis ABC affiliate WHBQ-TV 13. New World then put WGHP in an outside trust on September 9, 1994. However, ABC's affiliation contract did not run out until September 1995. Eventually; FOX Television Stations took control of operations of WGHP and WBRC using local marketing agreements in September 1995; with WGHP officially becoming a FOX affiliate on September 3, 1995 (just in time for viewers to watch the official debut of the Carolina Panthers {a 23-20 overtime loss to the Atlanta Falcons at the Georgia Dome, for those curious}) while WNRW became the ABC affiliate and was renamed WXLV-TV 45; with WGHP becoming an O&O effective on January 17, 1996 (this made FOX the fifth owner of WGHP in just over 10 years {being bought by Taft Broadcasting in 1984; a new Taft Broadcasting in 1987 after the original Taft group restructured as Great American Broadcasting following a hostile takeover; Great American {"old Taft"} buying the station back in 1992 before restructuring again after a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing as Citicasters; then New World Communications and finally FOX Television Stations})

Back out West to Phoenix, AZ; the home market of the newly-renamed Arizona Cardinals (called Phoenix Cardinals from the time the team moved to nearby Tempe {playing until 2005 at Sun Devil Stadium at Arizona State} until 1993 before changing in order to better reflect representing the entire state of Arizona). Four stations would be impacted there, and they were…

- KTVK-TV 3 (ABC; Arizona Television Company {founded by former Arizona Senator and Governor Ernest McFarland; at the

time this was one of the few locally-owned Big 3 affiliates in a major market})

- KPHO-TV 5 (Independent; Meredith Corporation {briefly a primary CBS affiliate from its 1949 sign-on as the first television station in Arizona until 1953})
- KSAZ-TV 10 (CBS; New World Communications {had just acquired it from Citicasters; KSAZ had changed its call letters from KTSP on February 12, 1994 {originally used the KOOL call letters until 1982 and was originally owned by actor-singer Gene Autry})
- KNXV-TV 15 (FOX; E.W. Scripps Company)

The New World-FOX deal would result in KSAZ displacing KNXV as the new FOX affiliate effective December 1994; with CBS moving to KPHO that September while KSAZ temporarily became an independent (the switch here was part of a deal with Meredith in which Meredith's Bay City-Flint-Saginaw, MI affiliate; WNEM-TV 5, would switch from NBC to CBS while CBS also renewed their affiliation with Meredith's Kansas City affiliate; KCTV-TV 5}. KPHO had actually been CBS' second choice; as the Tiffany Network had originally attempted to flip KTVK before the Arizona Television Company (run by the McFarland-Lewis family) turned CBS' offer down in expectations that ABC would renew their affiliation with KTVK — which had been one of ABC's strongest affiliates; only for ATC to be blindsided when ABC went to KNXV as part of the Scripps deal discussed earlier to keep WEWS in Cleveland and WXYZ in Detroit in the ABC fold following the initial New World-FOX deal and CBS' attempts to find replacements in those markets.

To modify the famed (though slightly misquoted) line from William Congreve's "The Mourning Bride"; Hell had no fury like a station in this case scorned, and KTVK made it clear early on the

station was burning its bridges with ABC; dropping “Good Morning America”; “Mike and Maty” (which the station aired only 30 minutes of); “ABC World News Now” and even “Nightline” and the network’s Saturday morning lineup over the next four months, replacing it with increased local newscasts and syndicated programming (including virtually everything available from King World Productions; such as “Wheel of Fortune”; “Jeopardy!” {both of which had previously aired on KSAZ}; "Rolonda" {a short-lived talk-show hosted by Inside Edition alumna Rolonda Watts} and “American Journal” {both of these previously airing on the one station unaffected by the mass shifting in Phoenix; NBC affiliate KPNX-TV 12} among others in addition to renewing rights to shows from the syndicator it already aired such as “Oprah” {the loss of affiliation made KTVK the first non-network station to carry that show; with many of the stations carrying "Oprah" being ABC affiliates} and “Inside Edition” {also picked up from KSAZ}). KNXV officially became the market’s ABC affiliate on January 9, 1995; three months after KPHO joined CBS and just shy of one month since KSAZ officially joined FOX; while two days later KTVK temporarily took on the WB. However, even after dumping ABC; KTVK had such a large inventory of programs there wasn’t enough room to air them all. Enter a soon-to-launch station; KASW-TV 61 (owned by the Brooks family). KTVK entered an LMA where channel 3 leased the station’s entire day; resulting in KTVK officially becoming a true independent when KASW signed on as the area’s WB affiliate on September 22, 1995. One other curious note was that this left KASW airing both the FOX Kids block previously carried by KTVK after KSAZ (like most of the New World stations) turned the block down AND the newly-launched Kids’ WB! lineup; giving that station a kids’ show-heavy lineup similar to WBNX-TV 55; the WB affiliate in Cleveland-Akron owned by Akron-based televangelist Ernest Angley.

7. REVENGE OF WESTINGHOUSE

Turning our attention back to the Scripps deal to keep ABC on WEWS and WXYZ. As mentioned earlier; as part of the Scripps-ABC deal; ABC would move their affiliation to the following stations…

- WMAR-TV 2 (Baltimore, MD; NBC {since 1981; previously CBS — longtime market also-ran}; Scripps-Howard)
- WCPO-TV 9 (Cincinnati, OH; CBS {since 1961; when that station and ABC affiliate WKRC swapped affiliations}; Scripps-Howard)
- KNXV-TV 15 (Phoenix, AZ; FOX {lame-duck — scheduled to lose FOX to KSAZ-TV 10}; Scripps-Howard)
- WFTS-TV 28 (Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL; FOX {lame-duck — scheduled to lose FOX to WTVT-TV 13}; Scripps-Howard)

The focus here will be on Baltimore; where all the traditional “Big 3” stations were impacted. In addition to WMAR; the other stations involved in Charm City were…

- WBAL-TV 11 (CBS {since 1981; previously NBC}; Hearst Broadcasting)
- WJZ-TV 13 (ABC; Westinghouse Broadcasting {often called “Group W”})

The switch would take effect on January 2, 1995; after which WMAR would get the ABC affiliation stripped away from WJZ; which would end up with the CBS affiliation while WBAL would get its NBC affiliation back. However, Group W felt double-crossed by the switch for a number of reasons, not the least of which included the fact that WJZ was the longtime market-leader in Baltimore and one of the strongest ABC affiliates overall, and were understandably ticked off at

the way Scripps strong-armed ABC into moving their affiliation; thus setting up a separate string of dominoes collapsing. In addition to WJZ (owned by Westinghouse since 1957); the other stations owned by Group W as of mid-1994 were…

- WBZ-TV 4 (Boston, MA; NBC; Westinghouse-owned since 1948 {the only station owned by Group W since going on-air})
- KPIX-TV 5 (San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA; CBS; Westinghouse-owned since 1954)
- KYW-TV 3 (Philadelphia, PA; NBC; Westinghouse-owned from 1953-56 and since 1965 {in between; KYW — then WPTZ — was swapped to NBC in exchange for Cleveland NBC O&O WNBK — which adopted the KYW calls; only for the Justice Department to accuse NBC of extortion and coercion in the deal; triggering an 8-year investigation before the FCC ordered the swap reversed in 1964; with the switch taking effect in 1965 after an appeal was denied. Also; by 1994 KYW was — much like WMAR — the market also-ran and had been since the late 1970s departures of anchors Mort Crim {later in Chicago before moving to Detroit NBC affiliate WDIV-TV 4} and Jessica Savitch {hired by NBC News; where she remained until her death in 1983})
- KDKA-TV 2 (Pittsburgh, PA; CBS; Westinghouse-owned since 1955 {originally DuMont station WDTV-TV 2 — it was the most successful of the stations affiliated with that short-lived network and whose sale effectively hastened DuMont’s demise})

Westinghouse then decided to seek its own affiliation deal; eventually agreeing to swap all of its stations to CBS. As part of this deal, Group W would carry the entire schedule without preemptions except for local news emergencies. This detail is quite significant considering that Group W stations were notorious for preempting

network programming to run Westinghouse-produced shows such as “PM (Evening on the Group W stations) Magazine”; something which was a sore spot with said networks — especially NBC (particularly in the case of KYW considering their longtime network struggles while the Peacock was number 1 for most of the 1980s and 1990s). The first changes involved the two stations (KPIX and KDKA) that were already CBS affiliates; both of which ended their preemption practices in favor of carrying the entire schedule (though KPIX — as the Bay Area’s then-NBC affiliate KRON-TV 4 was also doing — aired the CBS primetime lineup an hour early). On January 2, 1995; as mentioned earlier the three-way WMAR-WBAL-WJZ swap took place while in Boston; WBZ traded affiliations with Boston CBS affiliate WHDH-TV 7 (owned by Sunbeam Broadcasting; which had already seen one affiliation swap free-for-all involving its Miami FOX affiliate; WSVN-TV 7).

The City of Brotherly Love would be the site of the most complicated switches. With KYW set to join CBS on September 10, 1995; CBS was preparing to sell WCAU-TV 10 directly to NBC until the discovery that if it did, CBS would be hit with a massive capital gains tax bill. CBS then decided to propose a trade in which they would trade WCAU (briefly sought after by New World {in a bidding war with NBC for WCAU} and then FOX proper before Paramount/Viacom — owner of FOX affiliate WTXF-TV 29 — sold that station to FOX while Viacom went on their own and acquired WGBS-TV 57 {which FOX had originally planned to purchase in late 1993; only for WGBS parent company Combined Broadcasting backing out due to foreign ownership concerns}; with those deals closing on August 25, 1995) to NBC in exchange for two Western NBC O&O’s; KCNC-TV 4 in Denver and KUTV-TV 2 in Salt Lake City. In all; between the Philadelphia, Denver, Salt Lake City and Miami markets 9 stations were impacted in one form or another. Those were…

- KYW-TV 3 (Philadelphia, PA; NBC {to be CBS effective September 10, 1995}; Westinghouse Broadcasting)
- WCAU-TV 10 (Philadelphia, PA; CBS {to be NBC effective September 10, 1995}; CBS, Inc.)
- KCNC-TV 4 (Denver, CO; NBC; National Broadcasting Company {became an O&O upon NBC’s 1986 merger with the station's previous owner; General Electric})
- KMGH-TV 7 (Denver, CO; CBS; McGraw-Hill)
- KUSA-TV 9 (Denver, CO; ABC; Gannett {KBTV from its 1952 sign-on until 1984 and originally had a secondary affiliation with NBC until 1953})
- KUTV-TV 2 (Salt Lake City, UT; NBC; National Broadcasting Company {had just acquired the station from VS&A Communications Partners in 1994})
- KSL-TV 5 (Salt Lake City, UT; CBS; Bonneville International {flagship station/Bonneville is the LDS Church’s for-profit broadcasting division)
- WTVJ-TV 4 (Miami, FL; NBC {since 1989; CBS previously}; National Broadcasting Company)
- WCIX-TV 6 (Miami, FL; CBS {since 1989; previously FOX and before that independent}; CBS, Inc.)

As a result of the Philadelphia trades; in addition to KYW become a CBS affiliate and WCAU going from a CBS to an NBC O&O; this also led to all of the “Big 3” stations in Denver swapping affiliations on September 10, with KCNC going from an NBC O&O to a CBS O&O; KMGH, which had lost its CBS affiliation ending up with ABC while longtime market leader KCNC became the new home of the Peacock in Denver; while KUTV and KSL also traded affiliations with the former also becoming a CBS O&O. Finally, as compensation for losing KCNC

and KUTV; Miami NBC O&O WTVJ traded transmitter facilities and channel frequencies with CBS station WCIX; resulting in the former moving down from channel 4 to channel 6 while WCIX moved to channel 4 and changing its call letters to WFOR.

8. OTHER SWITCHES: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

We're going to go over the other channel swaps rather quickly and in alphabetical order. First, in Austin; where the capital of Texas — doubling as an unofficial secondary market of sorts for Dallas Cowboys games saw a straight affiliation swap involving…

- KTBC-TV 7 (CBS; New World Communications {which had just acquired Argyle Television; which itself had recently acquired Times Mirror in 1994; originally owned by the family of President Lyndon B. Johnson until 1973})
- KVBO-TV 42 (FOX; Granite Broadcasting)

On July 1, 1995; the two stations traded affiliations and the following day KVBO switched call letters to KEYE (relating both to the song "The Eyes of Texas"; a song associated with the University of Texas sung to the tune of "I've Been Working On the Railroad" as well as the CBS Eyemark logo.

Another up and down switch; this time in Bakersfield, CA. Stations impacted here were…

- KERO-TV 23 (CBS {NBC until 1983}; McGraw-Hill)
- KBAK-TV 29 (ABC; Westward Communications {start-up linked to several former executives of Burnham Broadcasting, which left this station out when most of its other stations were sold to the

FOX-Savoy joint venture SF Broadcasting})

The swap in Bakersfield was the result of the McGraw-Hill affiliation deal with ABC; resulting in the stations trading affiliations effective March 1996.

Looking now at Binghamton, NY; covering the Southern Tier of the Empire State of New York and the Northern Tier of the Keystone State of Pennsylvania. Only one station was impacted here, and that would be…

- WICZ-TV 40 (NBC {secondary affiliation with FOX to carry the FOX Kids lineup; with other FOX programs available only via either out-of-market stations such as New York flagship WNYW-TV 5 or the old Foxnet cable national feed}; Stainless, Inc. {a tower manufacturer primarily})

Upon WICZ's affiliation with the Peacock expiring, WICZ joined FOX effective April 4, 1996; with viewers who wanted to watch NBC programming in the area having to rely on cable where Time Warner Cable entered a local marketing agreement with NBC affiliate WETM-TV 18 in nearby Elmira in which Binghamton viewers could watch a cable-only Binghamton version of the station. NBC programming would officially return to Binghamton proper in October 1997; when David Grant, the owner of low-powered station WBGH-LP (having changed its call letters from W08DL two months earlier), sold that station to WETM's parent company Smith Broadcasting, with the new owners turning the station into a semi-satellite of WETM.

Another "one station" switch occurred in Iowa; where the Cedar Rapids-Waterloo-Dubuque region saw the changes take place at…

- KDUB-TV 40 (Dubuque, IA; ABC; Lloyd Hearing Aid Corporation {which returned the station to air in 1976 after it went dark in 1974 after general manager Gerald Green was investigated over whether the $19,000 he paid an ABC executive counted as a bribe {Green was cleared but the station ran into financial difficulties and went off the air on October 3, 1974; while the ABC executive was eventually convicted of extorting payoffs})

The station, long embroiled in a bitter battle with Cedar Rapids-licensed ABC affiliate KCRG that ended up resolving itself in a decision where the local cable company in Dubuque was required to black out KCRG when both stations showed the same shows at the same time. Eventually, KDUB entered an agreement with Second Generation of Iowa, owners of KFXA-TV 28; the Cedar Rapids FOX station, in which effective on August 13, 1995 KDUB would become a semi-satellite of KFXA, renaming itself KFXB.

Entering Charleston, SC; where we had another straight up-and-down swap. The stations involved were…

- WCBD-TV 2 (ABC; Media General)
- WCIV-TV 4 (NBC; Allbritton Cummonications)

The catalyst of this deal was the Allbritton affiliation deal with ABC related to the situation in Birmingham; with the switch taking effect on August 19, 1996.

Turning our attention to Cincinnati, home of the AFC's Bengals; where the stations impacted were…

- WCPO-TV 9 (CBS {ABC until 1961}; E.W. Scripps)
- WKRC-TV 12 (ABC {CBS until 1961}; Citicasters {though not one of the stations involved in the initial New World acquisition})

The swap — the result of the E.W. Scripps deal with ABC that sparked the wrath of Westinghouse — took effect on June 3, 1996 (WCPO had planned to join ABC the previous September, except WKRC's affiliation contract didn't run out until that June); which in this case had two different side effects. The first was that it reversed a previous affiliation swap between the two stations in 1961 when WKRC became the market ABC affiliate while WCPO picked up CBS. Also, WKRC would be purchased by Jacor Communications shortly after the swap in September 1996; reuniting it with AM dial sister station WCKY-AM 550, acquired three years earlier following Great American Broadcasting's bankruptcy reorganization and which in 1997 returned to its previous WKRC calls.

Evansville is where we next turn our attention; and there are three stations to look at here, and while there were no NFL teams representing Evansville; there WAS an NFL tie involving one of the stations (listed below). Those are…

- WTVW-TV 7 (ABC; Petracom Broadcasting {acquired from BankAmerica subsidiary Banam in 1995 — two years after Banam obtained the station from Dothan-based broadcaster, perennial candidate and businessman Charles Woods - who had been severely burned and had his face destroyed following a plane crash in 1944 during World War II; with Woods being the only survivor while Captain Stalmacher - the pilot-in-training with him - was killed})
- WEHT-TV 25 (CBS; Gilmore Broadcasting Corporation)

- WEVV-TV 44 (FOX; owned by Buffalo Bills owner Ralph Wilson {who owned a handful of other stations at the time, most notably KICU-TV 36 in San Francisco, CA})

The genesis of this deal came from the fact that shortly after Petracom acquired WTVW; FOX picked up 20% equity in the firm; resulting in WTVW — the local ABC affiliate for 39 years — dropping ABC for FOX; ABC moving to WEHT — the CBS affiliate in town for 41 years — and CBS moving their affiliation to WEVV effective December 3, 1995 (incidentally before that; WEVV had been gradually adding CBS shows WEHT had dropped starting with the popular CBS game show "The Price is Right", which WEVV began airing on September 18). WEVV would subsequently dump much of the syndicated shows they no longer had room for on WTSN-LP 56.

Fairbanks, Alaska is where we turn next. This involved…

- KTVF-TV 11 (CBS; had been a secondary affiliate of NBC since 1985 and before that was an ABC secondary affiliate dating to 1971}; Northern Television)

KTVF announced in 1996 that they would switch networks from CBS to NBC. The cause here was two-fold in this case: NBC was the #1 network for 1995-96; largely thanks to their Must See TV lineup that included smash hit sitcoms such as "Seinfeld" and "Friends", and rival KATN-TV 2 (the primary ABC affiliate since 1985) merging with Anchorage affiliate KIMO-TV 13 and Juneau's KJUD-TV 8 to form what became known as "ABC Alaska's SuperStation", with KTVF adding a secondary affiliation that allowed it to carry UPN programming starting in 1995 and going until 2000. This resulted in CBS programs airing for a time on KFXF-TV 7 — the local FOX affiliate — until K13XD, a low-

power station owned by Tanana Valley Television (also owner of KFXF) went on the air on August 7, 1996.

Coming to Michigan, specifically the area of Flint-Bay City-Saginaw, MI, was a two-station swap involving…

- WNEM-TV 5 (NBC; Meredith)
- WEYI-TV 25 (CBS; Television Stations Partners)

The moves here were triggered by the affiliation chaos in nearby Detroit; as with ABC buying WJRT from New World Communications (part of their “in case of CBS succeeding in flipping WXYZ in Detroit {as well as WEWS in Cleveland}” plan), With that plan ultimately thwarted when CBS settled for the former WGPR-TV 62, they still sought a nearby VHF station to cover some of the other suburbs of the Motor City. That station was WNEM, with Meredith successfully coaxed into switching affiliations; with the exchange taking effect on January 16, 1995. Note this marks one of the few cases where CBS moved from UHF to VHF (as opposed to the reverse in most of the cases covered); while WEYI added secondary affiliations with both UPN and the WB; both of which made their premieres that night.

Our next swap focuses on an NFL market, in this case the home of the Packers, Green Bay, WI. Stations involved were…

- WLUK-TV 11 (NBC {since 1983; previously ABC}; Burnham Broadcasting)
- WGBA-TV 26 (FOX {since 1992; after original FOX affiliate WXGZ-TV 32 went dark due to bankruptcy — that station having gone back on-air as independent WACY in 1994}; Family Group Broadcasting)

The incident here was triggered by the Burnham sale of WLUK to the FOX-Savoy joint venture known as SF Broadcasting; with FOX moving their affiliation to the four stations involved in the deal (covered earlier) — with NBC briefly launching {and then withdrawing} a challenge with the FCC that FOX parent company News Corporation that it was an improper shell corporation to get around FCC limits on monetary capital that a foreign company could invest in an American television station; resulting in the sale being approved in late April 1995 and taking effect that August; allowing the improving Packers (who had made the playoffs the two previous years and would win their first division title since 1972 and advance to the NFC Championship Game in the 1995 season) to have their primary station return to the VHF band after 3 years (WBAY-TV 2 had been the station carrying most of the Packers' games on CBS until switching affiliation with ABC affiliate WFRV-TV 5 in 1992); while WGBA entered a LMA that allowed the excess programs WGBA would not have any space for to move to the revived WACY-TV 32, now the area UPN affiliate.

Aloha from Honolulu, with another Burnham/Savoy/SF case. Stations involved were…

- KHON-TV 2 (NBC; Burnham Broadcasting)
- KHNL-TV 13 (FOX; Providence Journal Company {also owners of Seattle NBC affiliate KING since acquiring the previous owner in 1993})

As a result of the Savoy/FOX joint venture; NBC briefly considered moving to ABC affiliate KITV-TV 4 only for that station's financially troubled owner Tak Communications to sell that station and Buffalo NBC affiliate WGRZ-TV 2 to Argyle Television Holdings II; with

the new owners deciding to keep their ABC affiliation and KHON and KHNL swapping affiliations effective New Year's Day 1996 (incidentally, shortly before the switch KHNL began work on the world's first fully digital newsroom while incorporating fiber optic technology to air feeds from the other islands of Hawaii live).

Earlier, we covered a secondary market of one of the two 1995 NFL expansion teams in the Carolina Panthers when we looked at the Greensboro-High Point-Winston-Salem market. Here; we take a look at Jacksonville, FL and nearby Brunswick, GA; home of the other 1995 expansion team the Jacksonville Jaguars. Stations we'll look at were…

- WJKS-TV 17 (ABC {since 1988 and from 1966-80; NBC from 1980-88}; Media General)
- WBSG-TV 21 (The WB {since 1995; previously independent}; Coastal Com. Inc.)

This switch was actually one of the last to take place; as it was affected by the Allbritton deal with ABC. Allbritton was preparing to launch a new station, WJXX-TV 25, in nearby Orange Park, FL and hoped to have WBSG become a semi-satellite of WJXX. However, WJXX was not scheduled to sign on until April 1997; only for WJKS to announce they would walk away from ABC on February 1997 — resulting in ABC coaxing Allbritton to sign the new station on two months early. Allbritton acquiesced and on February 9, 1997; WJXX signed on as Jacksonville's new ABC affiliate; WBSG became the Brunswick-based satellite and WJKS took over the WB affiliate and was renamed WJWB (though as part of WJXX being the unexpected ABC affiliate for the market; WJXX was forced to broadcast in low-power for several months until the FCC approved their full-power transmitter). WJXX also had the distinction of being the first television station

designed from the ground up for the then-new digital television format.

Moving up to Macon, GA; where the stations involved were…

- WGXA-TV 24 (ABC {signed on in 1982; making Macon one of the last markets to have a third full-time ABC affiliate}; Register Communications)
- WPGA-TV 58 (FOX {signed on March 1, 1995 {previously FOX programming was available only via FOXNet or from nearby Atlanta {WATL-TV 36 until December 1994; WAGA-TV 5 afterwards}; GOCOM Media)

The changes here came after GOCOM announced that after nine months with FOX; WPGA would flip to ABC, with WGXA acquiring ABC. The switch took effect on New Year's Day 1996.

Another Wisconsin station where one station would lose a network affiliation to a new station, this time Marquette, WI. Here, we're taking a peek at…

- WLUC-TV 6 (ABC {since 1992/secondary affiliate with NBC since 1983; previously a primary CBS affiliate with a secondary ABC affiliation; carried secondary affiliation with FOX since 1992}; ownership unknown)

WLUC — impacted by several other affiliation changes in nearby Green Bay in the past — was impacted by one again; in this case former sister station (from its Post Corporation days) WLUK-TV 11 flipping from NBC to FOX; eventually becoming solely an NBC affiliate while ABC moved to newly-launched WBKP-TV 5 on October 30, 1996 (a Monday Night Football game between the then-defending Super

Bowl champion Dallas Cowboys and Philadelphia Eagles being the first broadcast on the station)

Turning to Memphis, TN (the home of the proposed Memphis Hound Dogs; Memphis would eventually become the home of the Tennessee Oilers when they played their first season after moving from Houston in the Liberty Bowl for 1997 before moving to Nashville's Vanderbilt Stadium for 1998 and eventually moving into their new home, Adelphia Coliseum {now Nissan Stadium}; upon which the team adopted its current nickname of the Titans}) and another straight up-and-down swap. The stations involved were…

- WHBQ-TV 13 (ABC; Adams Communications {since 1990; WHBQ had been the last television station and along with its radio sister station were the next-to-last stations owned by RKO General prior to its sale after RKO was ruled unfit to be a broadcast licensee by the FCC due to a string of dishonesty to its advertisers and regulators dating to the mid-1960s})
- WPTY-TV 24 (FOX {since 1990; previously on WLMT-TV 30}; Clear Channel Communications)

This deal was triggered by the surprise decision by FOX parent company News Corporation to buy WHBQ; with the deal finalized on July 5, 1995. However, for five months News Corporation (much like the situation in Birmingham) had to run the station as an ABC affiliate until the affiliation contract ran out; thus allowing the two to switch affiliations effective December 1, 1995.

Going to the other major market in Alabama, Mobile, where there was be an affiliation swap there; albeit much simpler than the tangled mess in Birmingham. Stations involved were…

- WALA-TV 10 (NBC; Burnham Broadcasting)
- WPMI-TV 15 (FOX; Clear Channel Communicatons {the first television station owned by the company})

Once again, we have the SF joint venture to thank for this swap; as the station swap took effect on New Year's Eve 1996.

Staying in the Deep South, this time the Monroe, LA market (also covering southern Arkansas) with a one-station affiliation change involving…

- KARD-TV 14 (ABC {NBC from 1974-81}; Banam Broadcasting {part of BankAmerica})

Earlier, we covered the last market to see an affiliation change as part of this stack of dominoes. Monroe would be the first, flipping from ABC to FOX on April 17, 1994 (previously, FOX was available only via the FOXNet service); consequently this left ABC without a local affiliate until KAQY-TV 11 signed on in 1998

Staying in Louisiana, this time at the "Big Easy"; New Orleans; where three stations got caught up in the fracas in the home of the NFL's Saints; namely…

- WVUE-TV 8 (ABC; Burnham Broadcasting)
- WGNO-TV 26 (The WB {previously independent}; Tribune Broadcasting)
- WNOL-TV 38 (FOX; Qwest Broadcasting {owned by a group of investors led by Quincy Jones})

This marks the last of the stations involved in the SF Broadcasting joint venture; resulting in ABC moving from WVUE to WGNO; the WB moving to WNOL (the market's original FOX affiliate) and FOX moving to WVUE effective January 1, 1996. One additional post-script here is that WGNO's owner, Tribune, soon entered a local marketing agreement with WNOL shortly after the swaps took place.

Looking to New England now; we turn to the Providence, RI and nearby New Bedford and Fall River, CT market and the situation involving…

- WLNE-TV 6 (CBS {since 1977; previously ABC}; Freedom Communications)
- WPRI-TV 12 (ABC {since 1977 — owing to affiliation deal with then-owner Knight-Ridder flipping two of the three stations they owned at the time to CBS; previously CBS}; Narragansett Television LP {which inherited the two remaining stations owned by Knight-Ridder; WPRI and Norfolk CBS affiliate WTKR, when Knight-Ridder got out of broadcasting in 1989})

The catalyst for the change was when Narragansett itself exited the broadcasting business; selling WPRI to CBS in 1995 (the other Narragansett-owned station, WTKR in Norfolk, VA, was sold to the New York Times' media division but was otherwise unaffected) shortly before Westinghouse's acquisition of CBS. That merger, finalized on November 24, 1995, created a new set of problems. Westinghouse owned nearby WBZ in Boston. The main issue was the fact that WPRI (and most other Rhode Island stations) had city grade signals covering most of the Boston-area and vice-versa along with grade B coverage to the remainder of Rhode Island (the FCC didn't allow common ownership of multiple stations with overlapping coverage areas; and as

for a waiver if the overlap was between city-grade signals? According to the rules of the time, fuggedabouit!). The result: While no further affiliation changes took place, on July 1, 1996; CBS decided to keep WBZ and sell WPRI to Clear Channel Communications (the big irony: Months after the sale, the FCC removed the waiver requirement for common ownership of TV stations in adjacent markets with significant grade B overlap signal, and by 2000 — allowed for common ownership of stations with city-grade signals when they began allowing duopolies)

Returning to the South and specifically returning to the Tar Heel state; this time the region incorporating the capital of North Carolina; the Raleigh-Durham-Fayetteville region. Three stations involved here, including…

- WNCN-TV 17 (The WB; The Outlet Company {which had bought the station from Beasley Broadcasting Group in 1994})
- WRDC-TV 28 (NBC; Paul Brisette)
- WFAY-TV 62 (FOX {since 1994; previously independent — WFAY became the secondary FOX station for sections south of Fayetteville that didn't get a good signal from the Triangle's main FOX affiliate WLFL-TV 22}; Fayetteville/Cumberland Telecasters {the group that interestingly founded WRDC})

Of the "other markets" not getting specifically devoted sections, this would be one of the more complicated change-ups. WRDC had long been the Triangle's also-ran; as nothing (not an earlier affiliation swap between ABC station WRAL-TV 5 and CBS affiliate WTVD-TV 11 as a result of WTVD's owner, Capital Cities, buying ABC in 1985; not NBC's #1 lineup of the 1980s and 1990s) seemed to help. Additionally, WRDC's history of preemptions drew NBC's wrath (much like it would with KYW in Philadelphia {also the bottom dweller in that market} and

during the 1980s WSVN in Miami); especially when — upon Paul Brisette's purchase of WRDC from Durham Life in 1991 — his solution to cutting costs was laying off nearly the entire news division (again, leaving a very ticked-off Peacock), and by 1995 NBC had had enough. Enter WNCN (which had changed its call letters from WYED); located in Clayton, NC (just outside of Raleigh) and licensed to nearby Goldsboro. NBC saw the station as an attractive option for a number of reasons: WNCN had just increased its signal as much as allowed, to 5 million watts, providing better coverage for the market. Additionally, NBC got along very well with WNCN's owner, Outlet Communications (tracing its roots to the department store known as the Outlet founded in 1891 but in more recent years known as a media firm run for years by Bruce Sundlun, who had just finished two 2-year terms as Governor of Rhode Island before deciding not to run for a 4-year term), with Outlet being the owner of two of its strongest affiliates: Providence, RI NBC affiliate WJAR-TV 10 (later to become an NBC O&O) and Columbus, OH NBC station WCHM-TV 4. But, as we've seen in places such as Birmingham, the change didn't occur immediately; with WRDC's affiliation not running out until September 3, 1995, leading to WNCN airing NBC programs WRDC rejected while WRDC began airing UPN programs on late night {UPN only programmed on Mondays and Tuesdays at the time and would never air network shows on the weekend}). Additionally, Brisette was sinking under a string of financial problems, attempting to sell WRDC first to Communications Corporation of America (a deal approved by the FCC but never completed; then merged with Benedek Broadcasting in 1995 only for Benedek to end up one station over the FCC limit. Finally, WRDC was sold to Glencairn Ltd., started by Edwin Edwards; formerly an executive at Sinclair Broadcast Group (the founding Smith family owned 97% of the company stock, leading to suspicions that Sinclair — which already owned FOX affiliate WLFL-TV 22 — was using Glencairn to dodge FCC

rules of the time barring duopolies (especially as the other Glencairn stations had similar arrangements) — this would not be the last time Sinclair was accused of using partnerships and local marketing agreements (which was done here as well) to avoid FCC limits on station ownership. In any event, on September 3, 1995 WNCN became the NBC affiliate for the Triangle (by 1996; NBC would outright purchase Outlet's broadcasting holdings); WRDC became a UPN station; Michigan J. Frog was displaced to newly-launched WRAZ-TV 50. WFAY stood pat, remaining the FOX affiliate for the southern part of the Triangle until being bought by Paxson Communications for the new PAX network in 1998.

On to Rapid City, South Dakota; where we take a look at one station and (rather unusually); a UHF full-power satellite station, in this case involving…

- KIVV-TV 5/KEVN-TV 7 (NBC {since 1984; previously ABC}; Heritage Media)

The changes here started in September 1995; when Heritage decided to sell to Blackstar LLC, a minority-controlled firm where FOX and Silver King Communications held non-voting equity interests (similar to the SF Broadcasting joint venture) for a relative bargain of $14 million. When the deal was finalized on February 7, 1996; it was announced that KEVN would flip to FOX, a move finalized in July 1996 (previously, FOX was available either via FOXNet; Denver FOX station KDVR-TV 31 or KOTA-TV 3 {an ABC affiliate which had adopted a secondary FOX affiliation solely for carrying FOX's NFL broadcasts}). The upshot, though, was that the move left the Black Hills region of South Dakota without an over-the-air NBC affiliate until 1998; when low-power station KNBN-LP 27 signed on in 1998; with NBC moving to

full-power station KNBN-TV 21 in May 2000 (until then; local cable systems piped in KUSA-TV 9; the new NBC affiliate in Denver}).

Moving west to Reno, NV; and the situation concerning…

- KAME-TV 21 (FOX {secondary affiliation with UPN starting on January 16, 1995}; Ellis Communications {operated by Cox Enterprises via LMA})

FOX would end up moving their affiliation to newly-signed on station KRXI-TV 21 upon that station's launch on New Year's Day 1996 (KRXI owned directly by Cox).

Let's look at the situation in Rockford, IL involving…

- WREX-TV 13 (ABC; ML Media Partners, L.P.)
- WTVO-TV 17 (NBC; Young Broadcasting)

This would not have been included in the series of moves had it not been for Quincy Newspapers buying WREX from ML Media Partners, a deal finalized on July 31, 1995. The affiliation swap took place two weeks later, and according to a report by Variety, was instigated by ABC as a retaliatory move for Quincy-owned WSJV-TV 28 in South Bend switching from ABC to FOX earlier that year.

Looking now at California's capital city, Sacramento; where the following stations were impacted...

- KXTV-TV 10 (CBS; Belo Corporation)
- KOVR-TV 13 (ABC; River City Broadcasting {would merge with Sinclair in 1996})

This up-and-down switch took effect on March 6, 1995; though interestingly KOVR kept one habit KXTV held from its time as the local CBS affiliate: pre-empting the CBS soap "Guiding Light" due to low ratings in Sac-Town; a pattern that continued until the show's demise in 2009, nearly 5 years after KOVR became a CBS O&O (fans of the series in that area had to watch it on San Francisco-based CBS station KPIX).

Coming down to San Antonio; where we take a look at two stations involved here...

- KABB-TV 29 (Independent; River City Broadcasting)
- KRRT-TV 35 (FOX; Paramount Stations Group {via acquiring the remnants of TVX Broadcast Group in 1991})

The backstory here involves KRRT parent company Paramount's joint-venture with Chris-Craft Industries (owner of local NBC affiliate KMOL-TV 4 {now WOAI}); resulting in KRRT joining UPN upon its launch on January 16, 1995 while FOX moved to KABB. Then things got interesting. Later in 1995; Paramount sold KRRT to Jet Broadcasting, which entered a local marketing agreement with KABB's parent company, River City; which subsequently took over KRRT operations. The agreement was inherited by Sinclair when it absorbed River City in 1996, then the following year Jet Broadcasting sold KRRT to Glencairn, Ltd. However, 97% of the Glencairn stock was owned by the family of Sinclair founder Julian Sinclair Smith; with Glencairn being paid in turn with Sinclair stock), creating a defacto duopoly (not permitted by the FCC at the time). Additionally; the fact that Glencairn planned to sell 5 of its 11 stations to Sinclair outright led to allegations (most prominently by Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow/PUSH coalition) that

while Glencairn's president, Edwin Edwards (a former Sinclair executive not to be confused with the notorious corrupt former Louisiana Governor), was black; the company was little more than a puppet of Sinclair to allow them to control the station via the LMA (not the last time similar accusations would be lobbied at Sinclair). By the time things settled down, KRRT (which switched to the WB on January 25, 1998; leading to NBC affiliate KMOL becoming the market's UPN affiliate as a secondary affiliate until KBEJ-TV 2 in nearby Fredericksburg, TX {covering both San Antonio and Austin} signed on as a UPN affiliate in August 2000) would eventually be acquired outright by Sinclair in 2001 (shortly after the FCC legalized duopolies); though not before the FCC slapped Sinclair with a $40,000 fine for illegally controlling Glencairn (soon afterwards, Glencairn was renamed Cunningham Broadcasting after Carolyn Cunningham Smith, the widow of Julian Sinclair Smith).

Back home again in Indiana, where on the banks of the Wabash, far away we turn to the city known as the Queen City of the Wabash; Terre Haute, IN. The situation here is a one-station situation involving…

- WBAK-TV 38 (ABC; Bahakel Communications {whose founder, Cy Bahakel, was a former North Carolina state Senator from 1972-76 and who was a guarantor of the $32 million loan for the franchise fee that led to the creation of the NBA's Charlotte Hornets})

WBAK, a non-factor due to Terre Haute residents being able to pick up stronger ABC affiliates from nearby markets in Indianapolis (WRTV-TV 6), Decatur, IL (WAND-TV 17) or Evansville, IN (WTVW-TV 7), decided to switch to FOX effective January 31, 1995 (with only three commercial outlets in Terre Haute; any viewers who wanted to view

FOX had to rely on the FOXNet cable service or Indianapolis FOX affiliate WXIN-TV 59); thus leaving viewers who wanted to watch ABC having no local outlet (and even then changes were in store. As covered earlier; Evansville ABC affiliate WTVW-TV 7 {which provided decent coverage for the Southern half of the Terre Haute market} flipped to FOX in late 1995, and new Evansville ABC affiliate WEHT-TV 44 -- like WBAK, on the UHF band, had a much weaker signal. Additionally, in 2005; Decatur, IL ABC affiliate WAND-TV 17 switched to NBC; resulting in ABC moving to WICD-TV 15 in nearby Champaign, IL - which had a better signal in Terre Haute due to its tower being near the Illinois-Indiana state line. Finally {shades of KIRO in Seattle}; in 2011; Nexstar Broadcasting {which had entered a joint sales agreement with Mission Broadcasting -- which had purchased WBAK from Bahakel in 2003 and renamed the station WFXW} signed a long-term deal with ABC to renew their affiliations with nine other Nexstar-owned stations that in the process led to ABC returning to WFXW {preceded by a retransmission consent fee dispute between FOX and Nexstar that led to WTVW in Evansville; along with WFFT-TV 55 in Fort Wayne, IN and KSFX-TV 27 in Springfield, MO losing their FOX affiliations [WTVW becoming a CW affiliate in 2013 after two years as an independent; WFFT became an independent for the same period before reuniting with FOX in 2013 while KSFX - which changed its calls to KOZL shortly after dropping FOX - became an independent until acquiring the MyNetwork affiliation in 2014] effective September 1, 2011; upon which WFXW adopted the present WAWV call letters while FOX moved to a digital subchannel on CBS affiliate WTHI})

Turning our attention back to the Deep South as this section winds down; we go to the market surrounding Tupelo, MS and nearby Columbus and West Point for a one-station visit involving…

- WLOV-TV 27 (ABC {secondary affiliation with FOX from August 1994-October 1995}; Lingard Broadcasting)

The Tupelo market; which had only three stations (WLOV; NBC affiliate WTVA {which had a secondary affiliation with ABC until WLOV signed on in 1983 and which WLOV had entered a program service agreement with dating to 1992} and CBS affiliate WCBI in nearby Columbus, MS), would find themselves lacking an ABC affiliate of their own upon WLOV flipping to FOX on October 10, 1995 until 2001, when WKDH-TV 45 signed on (interestingly, upon that station going dark in 2013; ABC returned to WTVA on digital subchannel WTVA 9.2) - with viewers in northeastern Mississippi and parts of western Alabama that wanted to watch ABC having to make do with getting Tuscaloosa's WCFT (covered in the section on Birmingham) or WPTY (covered in relation with Memphis).

Turning once again to Texas; this time a station near the U.S./Mexico border in Laredo, TX. Involved here is…

- XHFTV-TV 57 (FOX; Radiotelevisora de Mexico Norte, S.A. de C.V. {a division of Televisa})

XHFTV was originally scheduled to be build with a license of Nuevo Laredo and was planned to be a Mexican programmed station before signing on as a FOX station on September 3, 1995 (previously Laredo viewers had to either get FOX from FOXNet or from the San Antonio stations {first KRRT and later KABB}). Turning northward to the Lincoln and nearby Grand Prairie, NE areas. Stations involved here were…

- KSNB-TV 4 (ABC; Fant Broadcasting)

- KTVG-TV 17 (Independent; Fant Broadcasting {recently having taken over operations via a local marketing agreement from Hill Broadcasting})

The Fant-owned stations (which in addition to KTVG and KSNB also included Kearney-based KHGI-TV 13 and Hayes Center-based satellite KWNB-TV 6 were part of an ABC-affiliated regional network knows as the Nebraska Television Network, or NTV); and with KTVG becoming a FOX affiliate; the other NTV stations added secondary affiliations with FOX to carry that network's NFL coverage. In July 1995; Fant announced plans to sell the ABC stations to minority-controlled Blackstar, LLC (which FOX and Silver King Communications had non-voting interest) for $13 million. The deal was approved by the FCC in December 1995 but Fant, citing delays in FCC approval, walked away from the deal in May 1996; eventually selling the ABC stations to Pappas Telecasting for the bargain price of $12.75 million, and by that September KSNB was separated from NTV to become a FOX satellite of KTVG.

Looking now at Medford, OR and another one-station situation, in this case…

- KMVU-TV 26 (FOX; Salmon River Communications {via LMA between Salmon River and Bob & June Sheehan})

KMVU was a newcomer that signed on starting August 8, 1994; previously Medford's only access to FOX programming came via the FOXNet service.

Likewise with Myrtle Beach-Florence, SC involving…

- WGSE-TV 43 (The WB; James McGregor Everett {who had purchased the station in early 1996 from founder Carolina Christian Broadcasting, who had owned the station as an independent since its sign-on in 1984})

In one of the latest switches to take place; WGSE ended up becoming the market's FOX affiliate in November 1996; changing its call letters to the present WFXB. Prior to that point, the Florence-Myrtle Beach market was the only market in South Carolina and one of the few in the Eastern Time Zone without a FOX affiliate; with cable systems carrying either WACH-TV 57 in Columbia, SC or CBS castoff WSFX-TV 26 in nearby Wilmington, NC — more on them later. Back West we go to the Pocatello-Idaho Falls, ID area; looking at the situation involving..:

- KPVI-TV 6 (ABC {secondary affiliation with UPN}; Sunbelt Communications Company)
- KIFI-TV 8 (NBC; The Post Register)

In late 1995; Sunbelt acquired KPVI and satellite stations KJVI-TV 2 in Jackson, WY (despite being full-service was powered at merely 178 watts; lowest in the U.S. and tied with CJBN-TV 13 in Kenora, Ontario for the lowest powered full-service station in North America) and KKVI-TV 35 in Twin Falls, ID; and in January 1996; KPVI and KJVI switched to NBC in a swap with KIFI (one upshot is that KIFI, unlike KPVI, was willing to carry ABC's "NYPD Blue". KPVI, like a number of ABC affiliates — mostly in the South - declined to carry the series in its early years due to concerns over the cop show's content being much more explicit than what was the norm for network television at the time).

The next switch involves Victoria, TX; with the stations involved

here being...

KVCT-TV 19 (TBN {ABC until 1989; when the station ran into financial problems and dropped its network affiliation and news department}; Saga Communications {?})
KAVU-TV 25 (NBC {secondary affiliation with ABC upon the former station dropping it}; Unknown)

By 1994; KVCT moved to FOX; KAVU became a full-time ABC affiliate and NBC was the odd network out in Victoria. Interestingly, today the aforementioned stations are connected via LMA's between SagamoreHill Broadcasting and Morgan Murphy Media; also connecting them to five other low-power stations including the current NBC and CBS affiliates.

The white flag is in the air as we turn to a market teased in our peek at the Myrtle Beach market; neighboring Wilmington, NC. This involved a one-station switch involving...

- WJKA-TV 26 (CBS; Pacific Media Corporation)

WJKA - which until it signed on in 1984 made Wilmington one of the few Eastern time zone markets without a full set of Big 3 affiliates and one of very few markets without a CBS station of its own - was a virtual non-factor for a number of reasons; not the least of which was the fact that three of the strongest CBS affiliates in the Southeast (Greenville-New Bern-Washington, NC affiliate WNCT-TV 9; Florence, SC affiliate WBTW-TV 13 and then-Raleigh-Durham, NC affiliate WRAL-TV 5 {which flipped from ABC to CBS due to WTVD becoming an ABC O&O in 1985; now NBC}) either provided at least Grade B signal coverage and/or were available on cable. And so in 1994; WJKA and

sister station KECY in Yuma, AZ-El Centro, CA flipped to FOX (owing to, among other things, a dispute between owner Robinson Everett and CBS over a planner attempt to upgrade a Palm Springs translator for KECY to full-power); with WJKA adopting the current WSFX calls in late September 1994.

Speaking of Yuma, AZ, and El Centro, CA; that marks the site of the final switch we'll look at; involving...

KECY-TV 9 (CBS; Pacific Media Corporation)
KSWT-TV 13 (ABC {since 1991; previously NBC}; KB Media)

The aforementioned Robinson Everett and CBS feud led to KECY joining FOX; with KSWT returning to CBS (where it was the market's original affiliate from its sign-on as KBLU in 1963 until KIVA-TV 11, the market's original NBC affiliate, ran into financial problems and went dark in early 1970).

9. DENOUNMENT

The various affiliation swaps involved a total of 70 stations over a 2-year span; with FOX officially rising to major-network status alongside ABC, CBS and NBC. FOX Sports would rapidly grow to add Major League Baseball (1996); NASCAR (2001) and for a brief period the National Hockey League (1994-99) along with a prime-time lineup that added to shows such as "The Simpsons", "Married...with Children"; "The X-Files"; "Beverly Hills, 90210" and spinoff "Melrose Place" the likes of "Party of Five"; "King of the Hill", "Futurama" and "Family Guy" by the end of the 1990s, while many of the new FOX affiliates began or expanded their local news departments (with FOX programming fewer hours; hour-long newscasts and expanded morning newscasts to

compete with NBC's "Today"; ABC's "Good Morning America" or "CBS This Morning" would be common) prior to the launch of FOX's NewsEdge news sharing service (prior to NewsEdge's creation; FOX affiliates with newscasts usually used CNN Newsource or - less common - the Associated Press Television News or Reuters News Service for national/international news footage) and eventually the creation of FOX News Channel (though the political discussion series FOX News Sunday remains the lone network news program produced by FOX). By 1996; FOX would eventually buy out New World Communications altogether.

CBS, long struggling under the tight-fisted leadership of Laurence Tisch that resulted in the bare cupboards at CBS Sports, severe cuts at CBS News (which had fallen to last-place in the network news races; and with the exception of 60 Minutes, has remained there since); slumping prime-time ratings and the 1988 sale of Columbia Records to Sony; now faced even more difficulties in terms of ratings, with CBS trying to respond by shifting to a FOX-lite series of shows (most notably; Central Park West, or CPW); but it's difficult to accomplish when the viewers you're counting on are having a hard time finding where CBS is locally (this also hurt CBS' "The Late Show with David Letterman". Letterman, who had joined CBS after being passed over for the role of heir apparent to Johnny Carson on NBC's "The Tonight Show" in favor of Jay Leno, had been dominating Leno's incarnation of "Tonight" in its first 2 years; only for the switches to cause a viewership decline to where it fell behind not only Leno but sometimes behind the venerable ABC newsmagazine "Nightline"). CBS would not become a major factor until the late 1990s; when - following that network's late 1995 acquisition by Westinghouse (which as a result made all the Group W stations - which had already switched to or renewed affiliation contracts with CBS, as covered earlier - CBS owned-

and-operated stations). Under Group W ownership; CBS finally began opening up their wallets and - in an ironic twist - regained NFL coverage by beating out NBC for the AFC coverage rights starting in 1998 (rights which CBS retains to this date).

NBC, meanwhile, though already the #1 network had its position strengthened, thanks in large part to its "Must-See TV" lineup headlined by sitcoms "Friends", "Seinfeld" and "Frasier" along with dramas such as "Law & Order" and "ER" and their strength in their sports department as well as news (where after battling with ABC World News Tonight for the network news lead, NBC Nightly News became the top-rated evening newscast by 1997; which with a handful of brief exceptions - most recently for a brief period in November 2016 - has maintained that lead until 2020; when ABC regained the top spot for 11 weeks {by contrast, the CBS Evening News had been mired in last-place since the early 1990s}). ABC would be the least affected of the networks; with any impact during this time period coming less from any of the shuffling to occur there and more due to the network's 1996 acquisition by Disney.

The irony is that, while FOX was a beneficiary of the switches thanks to having stronger outlets for their programming, arguably the biggest loser was the FOX Kids block. Unlike the "Big 3"; which only ran kids' programs on Saturday morning, FOX carried kids' shows on weekday afternoons as well as Saturday mornings. However, as mentioned in a few other places the stations involved in the New World Communications deal - most notoriously in the St. Louis instance earlier - wanted nothing to do with the block; preferring to use the time to add new or expanded newscasts. This led to the FOX Kids' block - now headlined by the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers franchise (whose producer, Lou Saban, would merge his Saban Entertainment with FOX

Children's Network to form FOX Kids Networks Worldwide) along with Marvel-produced series "Spider-Man"; "The Tick" and "X-Men" - landing on other independents or affiliates of newly-launched UPN or the WB (such as happened briefly in KNLC with St. Louis or the Ernest Angley-owned WBNX in Cleveland). This, combined with the Federal Communications Commission deciding by 1997 to strengthen the previously-passed Children's Television Act of 1990 by requiring full-power stations to carry at least 3 hours of educational and informative programs per week and the rapid rise of kids' themed cable channels such as Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, would radically take its toll on the block; as the block - the top-rated kids' block since 1992 - was overtaken in 1998 by ABC's "One Saturday Morning" block created largely to address the FCC educational concerns, then the next year by the Kids' WB block (which by 1999 had achieved a coup by broadcasting an English dub of Pokemon; later adding other anime shows such as Cardcaptors and Yu-Gi-Oh as its aging domestic-produced lineup of shows such as "Animaniacs" and "Pinky and the Brain" {the latter further hampered by an ill-advised decision by management - particularly Jamie Kellner; a former FOX executive until 1994 and who was equally reviled by pro wrestling fans for hastening the demise of World Championship Wrestling with a series of ill-advised moves that led to WCW being dropped from TBS and TNT, allowing for rival promotion World Wrestling Federation {WWF; now WWE} to acquire the assets in 2001 - to shoehorn the Elmyra Duff character from "Tiny Toons" on that series, with it being renamed "Pinky, Elmyra and the Brain"}, faded from the scene). FOX Kids Networks, meanwhile, sought expansion by purchasing International Family Entertainment (owner of the Family Channel) from Virginia Beach-based televangelist Pat Robertson to provide a cable outlet to challenge Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon. 1998 also saw FOX buy its affiliates' interest in FOX Kids in order to help pay to renew FOX's

NFL rights; but as the 21st century dawned, the block waned with the weekday block ending in late 2001 and FOX ultimately leasing their block off to 4Kids Entertainment (itself the producer of the aforementioned English dub of Pokemon), with the block being renamed FoxBox in 2002 and finally 4KidsTV; where the block - thanks to both the inability of FOX to maintain a promised 90% clearance rate and 4Kids having long failed to pay FOX for the time lease - went out with a whimper, ending on December 27, 2008; with FOX taking 2 of the 4 hours for an infomercial block known as "Weekend Marketplace" while the remaining two hours were given to the affiliates.